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ABSTRACT

When the North Harris Montgomery Community College District (Texas) opened its fourth college in fall 1994, division chairs undertook an effort to build a unified base of instructional leadership through the establishment of a District-wide Council of Chairs. The Council was designed to help chairs adopt a proactive approach to identifying and resolving instruction-related issues, develop leadership skills, become advocates for adjunct as well as full-time faculty, manage resources effectively, protect the integrity of the curriculum across the District, and mentor new division chairs. The first two projects undertaken by the Council were the creation of a job description for division chairs and the development of a district-wide approach for adjunct faculty development. The Council, now called the Associate Dean's Council, is currently in the process of becoming an official part of the District's governing process. Keys to the Council's success included involving all individuals who might be affected as early as possible, distributing accurate information during its formation to prevent false rumors, establishing specific priorities, selecting practical and reachable goals, and realizing that change takes time. A job description for division chairs showing required tasks related to leadership, curriculum revision and development, instruction, instructional services, human resources, and institutional representation is appended. (BCY)

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MARCHING TO THE SAME BEAT:

THE BENEFITS OF BUILDING A CHAIR COUNCIL ACROSS A MULTI-COLLEGE DISTRICT

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

PATRICIA A. TIMPANARO

Pat Timpanaro is currently the Associate Dean of Health Occupations and Physical Education at North Harris College. Previously Pat was a member of the Associate Degree Nursing faculty at that institution for 13 years and then served as the Director of the Nursing program for three years.

Pat received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Cornell University in 1965 and a Master of Nursing in 1980 from Emory University. In 1991-1992 Pat took a leave of absence from her faculty position to return to nursing practice. She worked as a staff nurse and instructor on a bone marrow transplant unit at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. At that time she also served as an item writer for the National R.N. Licensure Examination. Pat received an award for Outstanding Performance in Nursing Education from the Texas Nurses Association and in 1994 the Nurses Alumni Association of Emory University recognized her with a Distinguished Nursing Service Award.

Although born and raised in New Jersey, she has lived in Texas for 21 years and considers herself a "Texan by choice." She co-chairs the Council of Associate Deans of the North Harris Montgomery Community College District with Reba Kochersperger.

REBA KOCHERSPERGER

Reba Kochersperger, currently Associate Dean of Fine Arts, Humanities, and Math at Kingwood College, began her career with the North Harris Montgomery Community College District in 1978. During the ensuing seventeen years, she has served the district as adjunct English instructor, full-time English instructor, Curriculum Coordinator for the District, and Division Chair. She was a recipient of the district's Teacher Excellence Award in 1988.

In 1972, Reba graduated from Baylor University with a B.A. in English. She received her M.A. in English from Sam Houston State University in 1977 and has since completed all her course work for a Ph.D. in English at University of Houston.

Reba lives in Spring with her son Greg, who graduates from high school this year and will head to UT Austin in the fall. Her older son Mike, a mechanic for Continental Express Airlines, is getting married in February. In her spare time, Reba costumes operas and other theater productions in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, at Kingwood College, and in Houston.

Marching to the Same Beat:
The Benefits of Building a College Chair Council

INTRODUCTION

Working in a multi-college community college district these days gives new meaning to "living on the brink." Words like "chaos," "mayhem" and "turbulence" are part of our everyday language as we experience planned and unplanned rapid change. Implementing any goal can prove to be a challenge in such an organization. The North Harris Montgomery Community College District, located in suburban Houston, is in the throes of this kind of change. When the fourth college opened in fall 1994, division chairs saw communication lines stretched even farther. This paper traces the journey of division chairs as they took on the challenge of building a unified base of instructional leadership across the district by creating a Council of Chairs.

GENESIS: AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAD COME

Feeling increasingly isolated, in August 1994, the division chairs of the three existing colleges met to discuss the possibility of working together in a more formally organized structure. Staff, faculty, and other administrators were already formally organized into networks which helped them function effectively. The division chairs reached a consensus that such a group would assume a positive role in working with the district's instructional vice presidents and vice chancellor: identifying issues, making recommendations, resolving problems, and providing leadership in professional development areas. The council would also give division chairs across college lines an opportunity to share experiences, establish an identity within the administrative structure, and work together as a team.

RETREAT BEFORE AN ADVANCE

The division chairs decided to meet for a day-long professional development retreat to examine the role of chairs and discuss common goals and means to achieve them. Marilyn Rhinehart, a long-time participant in Chair Academy leadership programs, drafted a memo informing all college administrators of the plan. From the very beginning the chairs intended to keep upper administration informed of activities in order to promote an environment of openness and collaboration.

The outcome of the retreat was that the chairs decided to form a council comprised of all division chairs across the District who directly supervise faculty. The group affirmed that the unifying purpose of this Council was to improve the quality of instruction. To achieve this goal, the group decided that division chairs must be able to:

- adopt a proactive approach in identifying and resolving issues related to instruction
- develop leadership skills
- become advocates for adjunct as well as full-time faculty
- manage resources effectively
- access data that serves as a foundation for instructional planning
- protect the integrity of the curriculum across the College District
- shape job responsibilities into a manageable workload
- mentor new division chairs
- develop a legacy for new leaders in the various disciplines and programs.

After developing and examining a list of potential projects, the chairs decided the sanest approach was to focus on two priorities for the academic year: creating a job description for division chairs and developing a district-wide approach to adjunct faculty professional development.

Over the next few months these priorities were addressed. The job description was accomplished through a DACUM process. DACUM, an acronym for Developing A Curriculum, is a process that analyzes an occupation systematically. A panel of division chairs analyzed their job-related tasks and produced a chart describing their overall duties and tasks. The chart is included as an addendum to this paper.

The professional development needs of adjunct faculty were addressed by preparing a proposal for a District-wide Adjunct Professional Development Day. The purpose of this one-day workshop was to provide both new and experienced adjunct faculty with the skill and information needed to teach a community college course. The workshop was planned for a Saturday just prior to the start of the fall semester. The agenda and resulting adjunct faculty "wish list" are included as addenda to this paper.

FORMALIZING THE STRUCTURE

The activities of this Council had not gone unnoticed. Two of the Vice Presidents proposed that the division chair group become an official part of the governing bodies of the college district. This could be accomplished by drafting a mission statement and defining our membership and the role and scope of our activities. Upon completion, we could seek approval from the Chancellor to become a part of the shared governance structure of the District. After a little over a year of existence, the Associate Deans' Council is in the final stages of

this approval process. Coincidentally, in the interim, the job title has changed from division chair to associate dean in recognition of our expanded roles.

HINDSIGHT 20-20:

The division chairs were acting as change agents in trying to organize into a formal structure and resistance to change was anticipated.

Some restraining forces to this change which presented obstacles were:

- anticipated opening of a fourth college threatened enrollment at other colleges and brought anxiety and uncertainty to the district
- some upper administrators perceived a threat to their power base
- another committee, another meeting

Fortunately, there were driving forces which gave the group momentum. These forces included:

- new complex curriculum process with major role for chairs
- opening of a fourth college created the need to establish working relationships with new chairs
- organizational restructuring at other three colleges
- decreased opportunity for division chair networking
- vigorous support of Dean of Instruction and new Vice Chancellor
- redundant efforts/projects across district resulting in frustration
- increased need for mutual support in a turbulent environment

The group did some things right:

1. Involving as early as possible the people who would be affected by the change. By memo and personal visit, all levels of administration were informed of the Division Chairs' intent to organize.
2. Distributing accurate information about what was going on in order to minimize speculation and rumors. Minutes of the Council meetings are e-mailed to everyone across the district. Feedback on this plan has been extremely positive.
3. Establishing priorities and focusing energies on one or two areas. Many projects were initially proposed, but the group decided to focus on adjunct needs. This year that focus will continue, but the group will also address its own professional development needs by planning informational programs for the meetings.
4. Selecting practical and reachable goals. Two major activities with specific outcomes were planned for the first year. The DACUM job analysis and the adjunct professional development day were both successful and gave the chairs an opportunity to experience the fulfillment of bringing a given project to closure.
5. Realizing that change takes time and patience. During the first year, the Council kept a low profile and took on tasks that were already within our job description. They didn't step on anyone's toes.

The group made some mistakes:

1. Including the Vice Presidents of Education at the initial planning retreat would have promoted the spirit of openness that the group espoused.
2. Investigating the requirements for becoming an official part of the new administration rather than pursuing a defunct policy that gave us a loophole to justify our existence.
3. Not recognizing that the politics and the structures of all four colleges are different, impacting the membership and function of the group.

Finally, an awareness of the stages of change described by Kurt Lewin (*Field Theory in Social Science*, 1951) provides some perspective. Lewin identified three phases: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. The group's initiative has moved through the unfreezing stage, but it is presently still in the moving phase of trying to gain acceptance into the governance structure. There has been some loss of momentum as some of the original members of the group have moved on and several chair positions are unfilled. A new approach to meetings may be needed to help chairs continue to value our organization. The present co-chairs are challenged with the responsibility of motivating their peers to continue to see the advantage of remaining united.

DUTIES	TASKS						
A. Leadership	A.1 Provide Vision	A.2 Establish a Creative Atmosphere/ Environment	A.3 Pursue Professional Development	A.4 Build a Team	A.5 Encourage Risk Taking	A.6 Act as a Role Model	A.7 Eliminate Barriers
	A.8 Meet Appropriate Faculty/ Staff Needs	A.9 Establish Priorities	A.10 Respect Diversity	A.11 Mentor New Faculty and Staff	A.12 Be Responsive to legal and Ethical Issues	A.13 Anticipate Student Needs	
B. Curriculum Revision and Development	B.1 Accept Responsibility for Curriculum Integrity	B.2 Become Familiar with Curriculum in the Division	B.3 Collaborate on Curriculum Initiatives	B.4 Lead Curriculum Initiatives (i.e. Dual Credit, Core Curriculum	B.5 Develop New Programs/ Courses	B.6 Validate Existing Curriculum (i.e. Tech Prep, Scans, Grants	B.7 Examine, Evaluate, and Revise Curriculum/ Program (Accrediting Agencies)
C. Instruction	C.1 Examine Instructional Issues	C.2 Promote Instructional Innovation	C.3 Provide Instructional Resources	C.4 Track Program Effectiveness	C.5 Develop Strategies to Respond to Effectiveness Data	C.6 Review Syllabi	C.7 Respond to Student Feedback
	C.8 Ensure Curriculum Standards	**The Division Chair Position** The Division Chair leads the instructional area by establishing a creative environment in which people are served, resources managed, positive learning promoted, and curriculum standards established using both interpersonal and technical tools for effective communication and accountability.					
D. Instructional Services	D.1 Work with Outside Agencies	D.2 Build a Schedule	D.3 Develop and Manage a Budget	D.4 Plan Physical Facilities	D.5 Oversee Physical Facilities	D.6 Maintain Contractual Agreements	D.7 Develop Program Policies
	D.8 Manage Resources	D.9 Write and Monitor Grants	D.10 Review and Order Textbooks	D.11 Oversee Lab Maintenance	D.12 Conduct Research/ Collect Data	D.13 Collaborate/ Discuss with Faculty	D.14 Develop and Manage a Project Plan
	D.15 Evaluate Plan						

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DUTIES	TASKS						
E. Human Resources	E.1 Recruit Faculty and Staff	E.2 Initiate the Hiring Process/ Recommend Hire	E.3 Initiate Termination	E.4 Supervise Faculty and Staff	E.5 Provide Legal Documenta-tion	E. 6 Provide Professional Develop-ment	E. 7 Evaluate Faculty and Staff
	E. 8 Solve Personnel Problems	E. 9 Follow Due Process	E. 10 Communi-cate Effectively				
F. Institu-tional Represents -tion	F. 1 Participate in District-wide and College Committees	F. 2 Assist with Registration	F. 3 Admit Students in Special Program Areas	F. 4 Advise Students	F. 5 Collaborate with Colleagues	F. 6 Network with Other Individuals and Institutions	F. 7 Teach
	F. 8 Implement Institutional Policies and Procedures	F. 9 Establish and Implement Departmental Procedures	F. 10 Plan, Conduct, and Attend Official Functions	F. 11 Schedule Facilities	F. 12 Market Programs		